

We need a lot more people to look like the Women's Tennis Association, not to look like the NBA.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

REMEMBERING GENERAL RAY ODIERNO

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to GEN Raymond Odierno, one of the greatest commanders of his, or any other, generation of American military leaders.

Ray served the Army and the Nation with great distinction. He attended West Point, and following graduation, he went on to serve nearly 40 years in the Army, retiring as a four-star general.

Ray's service took him around the world, from Germany and Albania to Kuwait and Iraq. He reached the heights of his career as the commander of all coalition forces in Iraq and a tenure as the 38th Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army.

Throughout his distinguished career, Ray was an inspirational force to the men and women he commanded and the leaders he advised. His character, professional skills, and abiding love and respect for those around him made him a preeminent soldier. His steadfast loyalty and commitment to his fellow soldiers and veterans was unwavering.

I was privileged to have worked extensively with Ray. His courageous leadership in so many demanding jobs leaves me with great admiration and gratitude.

We were both West Pointers and both had the privilege of serving in the Army, so we shared many things in common.

I recall first meeting Ray in Iraq when he commanded the 4th Infantry Division. I was immediately struck by his presence, his keen insight, and the mutual and profound respect he shared with his troops. His example of selfless service, dedication to his mission and his soldiers, together with his personal integrity and decency, sustained and inspired all who served with him.

I also had the privilege of working closely with him while he served as Chief of Staff of the Army. He proved an innovative and resourceful leader who continued to focus on soldiers and their families as he maintained an Army on the most robust deployment schedule in our lifetime.

Ray's love for his country was surpassed only by his love of family—his wonderful wife Linda and their three children; Tony, Katie, and Mike; and their beautiful grandchildren.

I offer the Odierno family my deepest condolences on his passing and thank them for sharing Ray with us for so many years.

The Odierno family's military tradition runs deep and strong. Ray's father was an Army sergeant in World War II. And his son, retired Army Captain Tony Odierno, also graduated from West Point. Tony served with distinction in Iraq before he was wounded there and came home and found other

ways to serve. I know that legacy of service will continue and manifest itself in many different ways.

Ray Odierno was a powerful, inspiring person. He dedicated his life's work to serving others, and his was a life well-lived. He will be missed by all who have had the privilege to know him and to serve with him.

I am proud to honor the legacy of GEN Ray Odierno, and I know the Members of the Senate will join me in recognizing the incredible contributions he made for our Nation.

And in words familiar to all West Pointers:

And when our work is done,
Our course on earth is run,
May it be said, "Well done; be thou at peace."

GEN Raymond Odierno, well done. Be thou at peace.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UKRAINE

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, news from this morning that 50 so-called battalion tactical groups have been sent to the Ukraine border by President Vladimir Putin—reports in American newspapers suggest that over the last several days there has been an increased amount of movement in Russian military assets to the Ukraine border.

This is a crisis that is deepening. There remains a diplomatic off-ramp, but that off-ramp only exists if Vladimir Putin sees the United States and its allies, especially those in Europe, united in our desire to support Ukraine in its time of need with the kind of assets they will need to defend themselves, but also with a commitment to levy unprecedented sanctions on Russia, long-lasting, deep sanctions, if they go forward with an incursion deeper into Ukraine than Russia already is.

But, right now, as we speak on the Senate floor, a small handful of Senate Republicans are blocking the key diplomatic personnel that would be able to unite U.S. policy with Europe around Russia's threatened invasion of Ukraine. And so I hear a lot of really strong-sounding press statements from many of my Republican colleagues, often the exact same Republican colleagues who are blocking these nominees, about how Joe Biden needs to stand strong for Ukraine, while, at the same time, they are down here on the floor denying President Biden the personnel that he needs in order to enact a policy that can save Ukraine from disaster—the Assistant Secretary for International Organizations, the U.S.

Representative to the EU, the U.S. Representative to OECD, numerous Ambassadors to European countries, including our Ambassador to France, France being one of the key nations that will help orchestrate a policy of cohesion amongst European nations with respect to the crisis in Ukraine.

And so everybody sees what is going on here. Not all of my Republican colleagues, but a small handful of my Republican colleagues, are setting the President up, raising expectations about what he should be able to do to save Ukraine but then denying him the personnel to get it done.

And I understand that, you know, the refrain from my Republican colleagues is, well, you know, Senator SCHUMER should just file cloture. They know how this works. For cloture, because of our current rules, the whole process takes days. We have pages full of nominees that we have to do. We wouldn't be able to conduct any other business. The Senate has never run like this.

When the Senate has had qualified nominees like Jack Markell, Mark Gitenstein, Denise Bauer in front of it, it has never required days of debate, cloture motions, in order to get key personnel, especially at times of need right now.

I hope we get an agreement to move nominees, but, frankly, time is running short for Ukraine. Time is running short for the Ukrainian people, and my Republican colleagues—the handful that are blocking these nominees—better decide whether they are interested in scoring political points or whether they are interested in standing up for the security of the United States and the security of the Ukrainian people.

REMEMBERING EDITH PRAGUE

Madam President, when they made Edith Prague, who died Thursday at the age of 96, they broke the mold. I am confident of this because in my 48 years on this Earth, I have never, ever met another person like her.

I knew Edith Prague as my colleague in the Connecticut State Senate, where she served from 1994 to 2012, retiring as the oldest member of that chamber at age 86. She was a friend of mine and a mentor. She modeled a form of public service for me that I will be eternally grateful for. There was no one in Connecticut public life as persistent, as dogged, as forceful, as Edith Prague.

She woke up every day thinking about the plight of workers, the poor, and the elderly. She had an acute sense of the injustice done to those who labored in difficult jobs, those making poverty wages, and those people who were living on fixed incomes.

And when she believed that a cause was right, she would not back down. In 1991, Governor Lowell Weicker hired her to be his commissioner of aging, and then, a year later, he fired her because when he told her that she needed to fold her agency into a bigger department to save money, she refused.

When she was elected to the State senate, she was a tireless worker, a

fighter for workplace safety laws, for raising the minimum wage, and for elderly nutrition programs. When she believed that a cause was just, nothing could stop her. She was relentless. I remember sitting in these closed-door Democratic caucus meetings with her, and she would introduce a bill at the beginning of the session, usually a bill way ahead of its time, expanding workers' rights or increasing supports for the elderly. And every week—every week—she would argue the case, and she wouldn't stop talking until she had persuaded at least one additional State senator in the room to support her bill.

At the beginning of the session, senate leaders would tell her: "No, Edith, we are not doing that bill this year," or "No, we just can't afford it." And she just wouldn't listen. She never saw a stop sign.

I have never seen anybody like this. She never saw a stop sign when there was something worthwhile to be done for the vulnerable. She would bring that bill up over and over and over again, and, eventually, she would just wear everybody down, and she would get it done.

She was in her seventies when I met her, and she had twice as much energy and stamina as I did. She was a force of nature. The last major bill she passed, she was 86 years old. It was a landmark piece of legislation granting home care workers the ability to organize and collectively bargain. She fought for the bill's uncertain passage all year, and then she stood on her feet for 6 hours, defending it in a marathon Senate debate.

She did all this with her trademark wide grin, smile, her big laugh. She was a consummate pain in the ass, but everybody loved her because, although she worked on issues of such gravity and seriousness and controversy, she brought such transparent, outward joy to her work. She knew she was a pain, and she chuckled when people tried to push her aside because she just knew she was going to outlast them.

I learned so much from her. She took me under her wing. She treated me so kindly when I came to the Senate as a naive 29-year-old. She believed in me, and her confidence meant the world to me.

Her energy and her enthusiasm for the causes she worked on gave me energy and enthusiasm for the things that mattered to me.

I think about her a lot when I work on the issue of gun violence. It wasn't one of the issues that drove Edith, but, you know, some days, it is hard to keep going on an issue like this when so little progress is being made nationally. But then I think of Edith, who never ever gave up when a thing was the right thing to do, in her mind, and her memory will keep me going, and I know it will keep a lot of other people going in Connecticut who knew her.

Longtime political reporter Mark Pazniokas writes for the Connecticut Mirror. He wrote a beautiful story

about Edith this week, and I will close with what he wrote:

[Edith] Prague did not go gentle, anywhere. She lived Dylan Thomas's poetry, his belief that "old age should burn and rave at close of day." She fought governors, fellow lawmakers, and, most consistently, the notion of retirement, a status finally imposed on her by a confluence of strokes and concerns of family and physician.

"My only choice is to retire or drop dead. I have to retire. Believe me, I don't like it," Prague said when she left state employment as the 88-year-old commissioner of aging in 2014. "Lots of people look forward to retirement," she said, "but I'm not one of them."

Edith was one of a kind, and the impact she left on people who knew her, like me, and the people who never met her, like those she fought for, is indelible.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, as we are now in December and the year is winding down, I am reflecting on one of the first actions, one of the first decisions I made when I joined the Senate back in January, and that was a decision to establish a judicial evaluation commission with folks back in California, professionals who would help me find, vet, and recommend candidates to President Biden to serve on California's Federal courts.

Usually when the general public thinks about Federal courts, they tend to only think about the Supreme Court, but, as those who work in this body know, the vast majority of Federal cases—indeed, more than 99 percent of all Federal cases—are decided at the district court or circuit court level. So, as we go about our work to strengthen the justice system in America, I think it is important that we give proper attention and support to district and circuit courts.

Fast-forward to today and the items that we are working on literally as we speak. Nominees to every level of the Federal judiciary by the prior administration—let me put it mildly here. We are far from diverse, far from representative of our Nation, and as a result, the Federal courts and those who sit on the Federal bench do not reflect the diverse, vibrant America that it serves. And I am not just talking about gender. I am not just talking about race and ethnicity. For too long, the bench of our Federal courts has been dominated by corporate lawyers and former prosecutors.

Now, prosecutors and corporate lawyers do contribute valuable and important expertise to the Federal judiciary. That is why I have supported the nomination of some this year. But the judiciary also needs the knowledge and perspective of legal professionals who have taken different paths. I am talking about public defenders, who uphold our constitutional commitment that every person deserves fair representation and due process. I am talking about public interest lawyers, who de-

fend fundamental rights and the rule of law. I am talking about consumer and voting rights lawyers, labor and immigration lawyers, and local government lawyers, who serve diverse clients and advocate for different interests and bring critical insights on how working-class Americans interact with the law.

We need all these perspectives in order to rebalance our Federal courts and hopefully in the process rebuild and reaffirm public confidence in the fairness of their rulings. Our country is stronger and fairer when every level of our government reflects the voices and the experiences of all Americans—not just the privileged, not just the powerful.

A Federal bench that includes more voices can better provide justice for all. That is why, over the course of the past year, I have worked with my commission that I established back in January—which, by the way, is 70 percent attorneys of color and a majority women, and I am proud to share that—along with Senator FEINSTEIN and President Biden, to find, to nominate, and to support a new generation of qualified, outstanding, and professionally diverse Federal judges—a Federal bench that is diverse in every sense of the word.

As a result of these efforts and pending confirmation votes that I hope will soon occur, I am so proud that California's district court bench will soon include Maame Frimpong, a proud daughter and wife of immigrants from Ghana, who used her law degree to fight for consumers and strengthen global democracy.

It will soon include Judge Jennifer Thurston, who earned her law degree as a night student while raising a family and spent a decade serving in county government.

It will soon include Judge Jinsook Ohta, an immigrant from South Korea, who spent nearly 10 years of her career helping to prosecute unfair business practices and to protect consumers from fraud.

It will soon include Judge Linda Lopez, who spent more than 10 years as a public defender in San Diego.

It will soon include Judge Hernan Vera, the son of Argentine immigrants, who spent a decade fighting for the disadvantaged and leading the Nation's largest pro bono law firm.

In addition, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals now includes Judge Lucy Koh, whom we recently confirmed, an expert litigator of intellectual property cases and the first Korean-American woman to serve on the Federal circuit court.

The Ninth Circuit will also soon include Justice Gabriel Sanchez, the proud son of a single mother from Mexico, who has earned wide recognition as a public servant and an appellate judge on California's court of appeal.

It will soon include Judge Holly Thomas, the granddaughter of sharecroppers, who has made a career of fighting for the civil rights of all Americans.